



# Sustainable Economic Development – Sierra Leone

## Improving the Supply Chain for Pineapple Concentrate

### Problem: Rural farmers do not benefit from growing pineapple markets

Sierra Leone is slowly emerging from a protracted civil war and is showing signs of a successful transition. Rich in minerals, Sierra Leone has relied on mining, especially diamonds, for its economic base. Despite this natural wealth, 70 % of its people live in poverty, especially in the rural areas. About two-thirds of the population engages in subsistence agriculture, which accounts for 52.5 % of national income. In a slow and tedious process, the country improves food and cash crop production and upgrades small farmer skills.

Processing of fruit crops, such as mango, pineapple or passion fruit adds value. Thanks to a high international demand for mango and pineapple concentrates, this has great potential to improve livelihoods in the rural areas. Africa Felix Juice (AFJ) LLP produces fruit concentrates. Even though the company can process a wide range of fruit, up until now it has only been successful in sourcing and processing significant quantities of mango, from the many existing trees in and around the surrounding farming communities. Sierra Leone has ideal growing conditions for pineapple, but – unlike mango – pineapple is a field crop that requires high technical support and input costs. Without land clearing as well as agronomic and management training it is difficult for rural farmers or their cooperatives to exploit the potential arising from pineapple cultivation and sales.

### Our partners

Africa Felix Juice (AFJ) LLP started operations in Sierra Leone in 2011 and processes fresh fruit into juice concentrate that it sells in the global market place. It is the first major exporter for processed or manufactured goods since the beginning of Sierra Leone's civil war. First Step Economic Opportunity Zone Inc. (FS) is a shareholder in AFJ and the operator of the factory. FS associates itself with AFJ for the implementation of this project. With 63 permanent staff, both companies generate a combined turnover of above 700,000 Euros and rising.

#### Contribution by AFJ and FS

- Project staff and implementation through WHI
- Logistics, in particular truck services from field to factory
- Certification costs
- Supervision, monitoring and evaluation
- Guaranteed off-take for the harvests



#### Contribution by GIZ

- Project management, organization and training of village cooperatives through WHI
- Technical backstopping

#### Contribution by third parties

- United States based churches and individuals provide the fertilizer, tools and pineapple suckers
- Africa Lion Agriculture Ltd. will provide a pineapple expert and strategic advice





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## Strategy and activities

The project will largely rely on a cooperative farming approach. It will work closely with World Hope International (WHI), an international NGO that organizes village cooperatives for rural farming. WHI and AFJ worked together in the mango supply chain, with 160 villages in the WHI cooperative network since 2011. The cooperatives will be the primary beneficiaries of this pineapple partnership as well. They are based on traditional village organization and leadership but also include mechanisms to ensure fair distribution of work and reward.

Training and agronomic assistance will be provided by WHI through its proven instruments and methods. Tools, fertilizer and pineapple suckers will be procured through funds provided by church-based groups in the United States. The cooperatives are expected to repay the costs of the suckers, fertilizer and tools to a smallhold agriculture input fund over time. This fund will be managed and controlled by WHI on a non-profit basis and is completely independent of FS and AFJ.

AFJ will engage as the main buyer for the harvest at agreed prices. They will also finance the certification of certain villages as “fair-trade” and, if commercially feasible, also as “organic”. Furthermore, AFJ will provide trucks and organize the transportation of the pineapple from the cooperatives to the factory.

The project relies to a great extent on the village cooperatives to function properly, for work to be shared, for all members to feel ownership of their plantation and, crucially to maintain their commitment throughout the growing period, when there will be no income. A baseline survey will be conducted on the beneficiary village cooperatives by Houghton College based in the United States so the information can be used as a basis for measuring future gains and achievements.

## Relevance for the partners

AFJ has the capacity to process various fruits, but relies largely on the 2-month mango season. It needs a larger supply of fruit to process all year long. AFJ has begun to address this problem by developing contract relationships with large scale (foreign owned) plantations – the largest now being developed is a 250-acre plantation owned by African Lion Agriculture Ltd. AFJ is, however, interested in diversifying the sources of pineapple and wishes to be noted for its commitment to the development of the rural farming sector in Sierra Leone.

## Planned Outcomes

The partnership initially seeks to establish at least ten pineapple plantations that will be between five and ten acres in size, with a total plantation area of 70 acres. It is planned to double the total acreage after the first crop, using the suckers that are produced by the first ten farms. It is expected that about 1,500 tons of pineapple can be harvested in the first harvest by July 2015. Farming income is expected to increase by 15% for approximately 100 – 140 participating farmers.

Each of the plantations will be owned and operated by local village cooperatives and be fair-trade certified. There is high potential for and interest in up-scaling by WHI and AFJ after the project has ended. Both partners aim to extend the pineapple production by village cooperatives using the suckers and funds generated by the first harvest and sales.

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- **Objective:** Rural farming cooperatives are capacitated to exploit pineapple farming opportunities
- **Partners:** Africa Felix Juice (AFJ) LLP in association with First Step Economic Opportunity Zone Inc (FS), Sierra Leone
- **Duration:** January 2014 – **June 2016**

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